

COUNCIL ON MENTALLY ILL OFFENDERS

DRAFT LETTER OUTLINE

As the Governor and Legislature consider structural changes to the correctional system, including proposals to move jurisdiction over non-violent, non-serious, non-sex offenses to local jurisdictions, the Council on Mentally Ill Offenders (COMIO) would like to offer policy suggestions to ensure the state achieves its goal of overall cost reduction. Currently, there are approximately 170,000 inmates in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) system. Of these, 21 percent are persons with mental illness. Inmates with mental illness are released at a lower rate than other inmates (65 percent of versus 84 percent) and return at a higher rate than other inmates (68 percent versus 58 percent). COMIO is dedicated to promoting cost-effective approaches to meeting the long-term needs of adults and juveniles with mental disorders who have a history of offending. We believe the Governor's proposal holds great promise for reducing costs and improving outcomes only if the proposal includes adequate resources and appropriate planning to support the needs of mentally ill offenders.

To ensure the persons with mental illness receive adequate support at the local level, any changes must include the following resource provisions:

- Money and resources must be focused on preventing the mentally ill from entering the system.
- Mental health resources must be provided to local jurisdictions along with the responsibility to the county.
- Funding incentives to encourage local jurisdictions to take responsibility for mentally ill offenders.
- The Mental Health Services Act must be altered to allow local jurisdictions funding to provide parolees with services.
- Restrictions to obtaining and utilizing federal funds for use at the local level to support the persons with mental illness population must be eliminated.

To ensure a smooth transition between the State to local governments, planning and coordination provisions must include:

- The state has to have an approval process for the Mental Health Local Care Plan and the providers before funding that includes the Courts, Board of Supervisors, and the budget process. Process needs to also include a best practices and evaluation component.
- Verify that Parolees have a system to register for and obtain benefits and care at the local level.
- Discharge planning must be coordinated and organized.
- All information regarding patient care must be transferred to the local level for consistent medication and continuity of care.
- Verify that parolees are being given the appropriate referrals if the Parolee Outpatient Clinic (POC) is no longer available.
- Address training and housing issues.
- Mandates need to be put in place by COMIO.
- Courts need to change responses to mentally ill parole violators.

COMIO respectfully submits these recommendations to ensure the persons with mental illness receive the care necessary to ensure public safety at reduced long-term costs.